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Equal Capacity

In the Subjects of *Great Britain* for Civil Employment, the best Security to the

GOVERNMENT,

AND THE

Protestant Religion.

SHEWING,

- I. It adds to the Power of the Crown.
- II. It secures the Established Church.
- III. It would reconcile and bring in many of the *Dissenters*. And,
- IV. The Acts made to the contrary, have never been the Produce of Mature Deliberation; but of Party Zeal.

Humbly Offer'd to the Consideration of the Most Reverend, and Right Reverend Fathers in God, His Grace the Lord Archbishop of *York*; and the Lords Bishops of *Bath* and *Wells*, *Rochester*, *Hereford*, *St. David*, *Bristol*, and *Chester*.

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Equal Capacity

I N T H E

Subjects of Great Britain, &c.

My Lords,

THE most sincere Regard to your high Characters and Stations, would have utterly discountenanced such a Presumption as this, had not a Publick Writer, very lately, *Prejudged* the Success of an Affair, of the utmost Consequence, that he supposes might come into Parliament this Session, by *bespeaking*, and, in a manner, *Promising*, the Weight of your Lordship's great Authority, on one side of the Question.

Your Lordship's cannot but have observed with Concern, that of late Years some Zealots have Started up in this Kingdom, who, under Pretences and Names of a Religious Import, have grievously disturbed the Peace of Society, and Neighbourhood; and that the very Term *Church*, which always denoted somewhat Sacred; and commanded Awe and Reverence, has been wantonly as well

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wickedly,

wickedly, made the Sport of Faction, the Political Tool of a Party, and an Instrument of Mischief: Insomuch that those Relations so necessary to the Publick Quiet, as that of a Subject, and a Neighbour, have been almost entirely destroyed. True Religion is left out of Dispute, and we are still at War about Names.

While your Lordship's lament these unhappy Divisions, the Consequences too, must have come under your Notice; they have made their way into some Branches of the Legislature, and brought, in some Measure, into Practice, those pernicious Principles so much cultivated in the Times of Anarchy, of *Founding Dominion in Grace*. The Subject has not been considered in his Civil Relation, and as a Member of the Community; but as he stood affected towards that Party, which held the Rains, and therefore has had the Capacities of discharging his Duty to the Publick, enlarged or diminished accordingly. Hence some Acts have passed, under a Notion of Securing the Church, which disqualify a very great part of the Kingdom, from serving their Country, or so much as takeing up Arms in their Defence against an Invader.

These Proceedings have lengthened out Controversies both within and without doors; and as they may, perhaps, come before that Legislature again; for a Review, in which your Lordship's have so considerable a share;
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and, with the utmost Deference, and a most humble Submission to your Lordship's great Knowledge, and Experience in such Affairs, it is desired that your Lordship's would vouchsafe to admit under your wise Consideration some Reasons, for putting all his Majesty's Subjects into equal Capacities of serving their King and their Country; presuming that they may have their due weight whenever those Matters may come before your Lordship's again in Parliament.

But that these may be presented to your Lordship's in the most advantageous manner, it is humbly begged Leave to observe, that as this Controversy has been hitherto managed, *viz.* Whether the Dissenters have an equal Right with the Establish'd Church to Places of Profit; has been upon a wrong Foot, because, 1. This considers not the Service which the Publick has Occasion for, but the Reward of that Service; and so raises a needless and an invidious Emulation, stirs up ill Blood, and continually adds Fuel to Party Striffs and Wranglings. 2. Because the Natural Rights, in many Circumstances, of a particular Member, is much more difficult to determine, than the general Good of a Collective Community. And 3. Because the good of every Community, necessarily implies the Security of particular Rights. And therefore, with Submission to your Lordship's, the Question in this Case, is *not whether all Subjects have an equal natural*
Right

Right to the Profits or Advantages of Serving the Publick; but, whether it is any Addition to the Publick Authority, or Security, to have all its Members in an equal Capacity to do the Duties of that Relation.

But previous to determine in this Case, it may not be amiss to explain our Conceptions of *Civil-Membership*, or settle such a Distinction, as it may be understood, who are meant to be Members of a Civil Community; or, in a proper Sence, the Subjects of a Legal Constitution, and who are not allowed to be such, tho' living in the same Neighbourhood or Country.

These are, to all Intents and Purposes, to be deemed Members, or Subjects, who conform to all Laws in being, and are ready to comply with all Civil Tests of Fidelity, which the Collective, or Supream Power, may judge necessary to enjoin at any Time, upon all Exigences of State, such as *Oaths of Allegiance*, &c. But those are not so who will not obey such Laws, and comply with such Tests; or who maintain such Principles as are evasive of all such Obligations, as those of the *Roman Church*.

In this View therefore all Protestants in *Great-Britain*, are, strictly Speaking, Members of, and Subjects to the Constitution, or Legal Authority. And as such, whether they are in Communion with their Brethren, within the Establishment, or with any Congregation, under what Denomination soever,

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out of it ; it is conceived, with all humble Submission to your Lordship's, that they ought to be upon an Equallity, as to their Civil Capacities, and Liberties, to serve the Publick, for the following Reasons, Because,

- I. *It adds to the Power of the Crown.*
- II. *It secures the Established Church.*
- III. *It would reconcile and bring in many of the Dissenters. And,*
- IV. *The Acts made to the contrary, have never been the Produce of Mature Deliberation, but of Party Zeal.*

I. *That it would add to the Power of the Crown, and strengthen the Constitution,* it is humbly presum'd your Lordships will allow, because such Power and such Strength is always, under the same Laws, or Regulations, in Proportion to the Number who support it. All such Acts therefore which divest a Part of the Community of their Share in such Support by *Disqualifications*, are equally prejudicial to the withdrawing so many from the Community, or diminishing the whole, by so many as are under those *Disqualifications*.

If any hereunto urge, that Places of Power and Trust, either Civil or Military, are not so many but that they may be filled by Persons of the Established Church : To such it may be returned, that innumerable unforeseen Difficulties, in some Exigencies and Circumstances, may arise to the Publick from
such

such a *Limitation*; (for as to the *equal Right* of the Subject, it is thrown out of the Question, and has been sufficiently Debated long since) as in the Cases of suddain Invasion, or Rebellion, both which this Kingdom has too often been threaten'd with; the most able and best qualify'd Persons to head a sufficient Power to repell, or suppress such Evils in their Beginning, may be under *legal Disqualifications* for any Thing of Command, or Authority; so that a *Landlord* may be forced to carry a Musket under his *Tenant*; or an experienc'd Person in such Affairs, be under the Direction of one who knows nothing of the Matter; or else the Publick must want their Service; which many Times, in such *Exigencies*, may be of fatal Consequence. And since many of the King's Subjects have been thus in Fetters, the Publick has experienc'd divers Inconveniencies in the Militia; in many Places there not being a sufficient Number who understand the Business, and can comply with those Qualifications, to Officer the Regiments; so that they who have the Direction of those Affairs, are under a Necessity of Commissioning Persons utterly unskill'd in the Business; or such as are disaffected to the Government, which is much worse; as the Consequence of having Men in Arms under such Commanders, has been experienced to be very fatal and mischievous, when any publick Occasion, or Disturbances have called for their Service. The City of
London

London has too grievously felt this, because that very Power that has been called upon, for their Protection, by this Means has been often turned against them; and those very Persons who were commissioned to suppress Disturbances, upon certain Occasions, have, from the Instigation of contrary Principles, frequently connived at, and sometimes abetted and encourag'd them. And this is now particularly complained of by many of the Lieutenancy in the *Tower Hamlets*, that they cannot Officer their Companies, with proper Persons, that are hearty in the Interest of the present Government, and Encouragers of those Principles that are its Support, by Reason of Parliamentary Disqualifications.

But the greatest Prejudice to the City in particular, from this Unequality of Civil Capacity in the Subject, is in their *Council*, which is annually chosen. For many *Wards* cannot find the Number, it is their Priviledge to be represented by, that are well qualify'd for such a Trust; by their natural and acquired Endowments, but who are either disabled from Serving, or by their Disaffection to the Government, and Propagation of Principles and Measures to its Detriment; are not fit to be so intrusted; the Inconveniencies of which have been found very great in many Instances, too tedious to particularize to your Lordships; and which may at some Time or other be yet attended by worse Consequences, if

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they are not unbound, who are the properest Persons for such Services.

And in the Commission of the Peace, the Grievances hence arising, are equally manifest and dangerous. Many Places, in the Country, have not Persons fit and skilful to act in such an Office, that are not hereby disabled to serve in it; so that for the Management of the publick Business, there is a Necessity of putting in such Persons, who, thro' their Prejudices and Disaffections, watch all Opportunities of encouraging an Interest contrary to that of the Government; and as far as is consistent with their Safety, will encourage and shelter the Enemies of our present Establishment, at the same Time that they exercise all the Rigour and Severity in their Power, upon all those who are known to be its Friends.

That this is one of the unhappy Consequences to the Publick, of *Civil Disqualifications*, cannot but have too often come before your Lordships Notice. During the late *unnatural Rebellion*, it is too remarkable how the Necessity hereby of Commissioning disaffected Persons in the Peace, gave Life to, and animated that wicked Cause; because that Authority which should have been zealously employed in the Crushing it, was in the Hands of those who were well-Wishers to it, and *Secretly* assisted in it, if not *Openly*; tho' one melancholly Instance there has been of the last Demand of the Law upon a Person

son in this Commission, who was convicted of Acting himself in that execrable Attempt.

These are Considerations which cannot but have their due Weight in your Lordships impartial Judgment; and must prevail with every one who has at Heart the Interest of his Country, to endeavour the Removal of the Cause, by putting every *British* Subject upon the same Capacity of Discharging his Duty to the Publick, and giving thereby to the Crown a greater Power for its Defence, because it will add to the Number of its Servants, and supply such a choice of Persons, for all Employs, as are heartily in its Interest.

Many other Considerations of Moment might be offered to your Lordships upon this Head, of Enlarging the Power of the Crown, by enlarging not only the Number of Servants, but imploying many of greater Abilities and Fidelity; which are here waved, in Regard to the Value of your Lordships Time, which is not to be diverted, but by what is of the last Importance. And at this Time more especially, your Lordships cannot but with uncommon Satisfaction unite in any Measures, for the Support and Encrease of a *Power*, now in Possession of a Prince, who despises all Greatness, but what arises from the strictest Justice, and sets no Value on Power further than it administers Occasion of doing Good; of Protecting the Community over which it presides, and

keeping in Awe all those who are Enemies to its Prosperity. So that every Addition of *Power* to the *Sovereign*, is now a new Acquisition of *Felicity* to the *People*, and making the *King Great*, is truly making the *Subject Happy*; and therefore none, it is presumed, can be either jealous of its Enlargement, or against any Measures for its Increase, unless those who wish for its utter Subversion, and are in the Interest of its open Enemies.

REASON II. *It adds to the Security of the Church.*

It is with the utmost Sorrow and Concern, that there is any Occasion of explaining to your Lordship's, what is hereby desired to be understood by the Term *Church*; for such has been the abuse of it, of late, that it is almost left a Sound without a Meaning. Here therefore is meant, all those in that Communion, whose Discipline, and Ceremonies, are agreed to, and settled by, the Legislative Part of the Nation, of which the King is Supream Head. And herein I beg Leave to be so particular, because, most, in their Debates of this kind, confound the Doctrine and *Credenda* of Religion, which are derivable only from a Divine Authority, with the Ceremonial Part of Worship, which is determinable by Humane Authority, and is indifferently in the Choice of every Congregation or Community; which makes it greatly

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to be wished, that People would learn to understand, by this Term, when used with regard to Doctrines, all those who are of the same Faith, as to the Essentials of Religion; and then all Protestants are of the same Church, of which *Christ* only is the Head; and when it is used with Relation to such Humane Laws and Authority as settles the Ceremonies and Discipline, as it is limited to our own Courtry, they would understand *that Church*, to which is added, *as by Law Establish'd*, because the Civil Authority made it such, and constituted the King Head thereof.

In this Sense therefore, and in no other, it is presumed your Lordship's would please to have the Expression of, *The Church of England as by Law Establish'd*, extend. This undertaking, then, is only to offer it, with all Humility, to your Lordship's, That the *Church* will be rendered much more Secure, by every thing that is an addition to the Power of the *Crown*; because, upon such an Establishment, it is so Interwoven, and made a Part of the *Civil Constitution*, that one cannot Subsist but by the other; and that therefore the *Security*, or *Danger* of the *Church*, will always be, as is the *Security*, or *Danger* of the *State*, because they are inseperable. It must be confessed, indeed, that we have been much alarmed with a Church, that has always been upon a contrary Security, its Danger encreasing with the Prosperity of the State;
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and its Security arising from the Destruction of the Civil Power. But it cannot be hid to your Lordship's Penetration, who must be the Agents in such Out-crys, and that a *Church* so constituted, can only be a Branch of that which exercises the worst of Tyrannies over both the Civil and Religious Rights of all within the Reach of her Power; and that the Promoters of such Notions want rather to *invade* us with a *New Church*, than to Establish, upon a better Security, that which we have already.

One Memorable, and for ever to be Lamented an Instance, we have of this near Relation, or rather Union, of the Church with the State, in the unhappy Reign of King *Charles I.* As the *Crown shook*, the *Church trembled*, 'till at last both fell into the same Grave together; tho' then, indeed, the Name was kept alive, but in the same manner only as it is now, when divested of its Civil Establishment, to propagate Confusion, and serve the wicked Purposes of crafty Statesmen, and Politicians.

In a true, therefore, and proper Sense, it will amount even to Demonstration, that every Addition to the *Power of the Crown*, must be an Addition to the *Security of the Church*.

And for that very desirable End, the Nation has not only all the Security, and Assurances imaginable, from the Nature of Things, and the very Genius and Texture of the Constitution, but from the repeated most
gracious

gracious Promises from the Throne. His Majesty has, upon all Occasions, declared his concern for that Part of the Constitution, and engaged in the most Solemn manner, his Royal Word in its Support and Encouragement; and, which is more than all, has demonstrated in every Part of his wise Administration, the Sincerity of such Declarations. Your Lordship's therefore, 'tis presumed, cannot but consider, with some concern, the Uneasiness of many, who lament the Diminution of a Power, by Parliamentary Incapacities, so necessary as that of the Crown to the Protection of a Church, they have the most sincere Zeal for; and therefore, with the utmost Humility, your Lordship's great Weight in Parliament, is implored in the Redress of such Grievances, when it shall come before You, in a proper manner, to decide hereupon; Howsoever your great Names have been bespoken on the other side.

We cannot be at all apprehensive of your Lordships giving into the Jealousy of any Dangers to the Established Church, by a Removal of the legal Disqualifications, and letting Protestants of all Denominations into an equal Share of Employ under the Crown; Because your Lordships have larger Views, and form a Judgment upon much juster Grounds than those of inferiour Rank and Capacity; who do not rightly distinguish between Religion and a Name, and cannot tell the Difference between a System of Doctrines
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and Articles, by which the whole Christian Protestant World are of the *Church of Christ*, as having their Force and Authority from Him only, and against which the Gates of Hell have never *prevailed*, nor never shall; and a Scheme of Discipline and Ceremonies, in the Power of every Community to make for themselves, and which is the very Essence of the *Church of England*, as by Law Established, of which, a Temporal Prince is the Head, and which has been *prevailed* against, and may be again, whensoever its Civil Head upon the Throne shall be so limited in his Power, as not to be able to defend it. Your Lordships can see that this *Church*, which is Civil and Parliamentary, is best secured by adding to the Power of the Crown, which is its Protection; and by so doing contributes to the Security of the Protestant Religion in general; because the Doctrines of *Jesus Christ* are maintained therein most pure and uncorrupted; and in which, the *Dissenters* being as express and firm as those of the Establishment, it is impossible, in reality, to fear any danger from them, as it is a *Church of Christ*; and as a National Church, the Crown must always interpose between Them, and any Attempts to alter it, because such Attempts can never succeed without Unhinging the whole *Constitution*; and making the Destruction of the Regal Authority, the Forerunner of that of the *Church*.

The great Deference we owe to your Lordships, makes us very tender in Censures that may in the least favour of Uncharitableness; but it is presumed, that upon an impartial Survey of that part of the Nation, which is thus for Cramping the Regal Authority, by *laying in Fetters* a great Part of its Subjects, they will be found either such; as thro' a Covetousness of the Profits of Serving the Crown, expect their Account most; by keeping it in the fewer Hands, or those who have Views in Pursuit, which the Regal Authority will always be a Bar against. For every one who loves his Country, must love the Religion thereof, or be a Friend to its Preservation, because it is the grand Cement of its Interest; and as the Established National Church is the main Bulwark of that Religion, by supporting its Doctrines in their greatest Purity, so they must be equally Friends to that Establishment; and, in Order to secure it, be willing to join in any Measures of Strengthening the Power of the Crown, because That is its Protection.

REASON III. *That it would help to reconcile the Dissenters, and bring them into the Communion of the Established Church.*

Lenity and Humanity are certainly the best Methods of making Profelytes; there is no Room for Argument to take Place upon
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any one, untill kind Treatment has brought the Person in an Error, to a good or favourable Opinion of him who would convince him of his Mistakes. As nothing draws so powerfully as the Chord of Love, so nothing can more effectually confirm any one in his Mistakes, as to prejudice him against those of a contrary Opinion, in Possession of the Truth, by Severities. But it must be altogether needless to observe to your Lordships any thing from such Considerations, because your great Penetration and Insight into human Nature, and your great Knowledge and Experience in the Genius of Christianity, cannot but thoroughly have apprised your Lordships of the true and generous Motives such Measures are best influenced by.

It may not, however, be amiss to observe, with all Humility, to your Lordships, that the Established *Church* never got Ground, by any Oppressions or Unkindnesses whatsoever, over those not in her Communion.

For this, we need not go back further than the Reign of King *Charles* the First; since which, there has been very remarkable Instances of the Effects, both of Mildness and Severity. In that unhappy Reign, did the *Church* carry it with so high a Hand, over her Brethren in Dissention from her Ceremonies only, that at length she brought the Authority of the *Crown* so far into her Unchristian Measures, as to oppress them in their Civil Liberties,

Liberties, and Enjoyments; the *Dissenters* ceased not only to be treated as Christians and Subjects, but had hardly the Regards due to them as Fellow Creatures. Which ill Usage, in a future Concurrence of Incidents, sufficiently shewed the Fruits of so ill a Seed; and the Hatred confirmed in them, by such ill Treatment, discovered it self afterwards in Resentments, and a Vengeance, that destroyed both those Authorities that had united in their Oppression. The great Weakness of the *Crown*, indeed much contributed hereunto; for when that was once dishonourably prostituted to the Ambition and Lust of some *Church-Men*, a common Enemy took Advantage of that unhappy Posture, and undoubtedly much contributed to the Success of the Injured, in their Revenge; and were the secret Prompters of those Measures which brought the whole Kingdom into a Scene of Blood and Confusion. And it is with the utmost Grief, that we cannot forbear here of particularly observing to your Lordships, that the Pride of the Archbishop, in raising the *Power of the Church* above the *Power of Godliness*, was the greatest Instrument in that unnatural Tragedy; and that the Weakness of the King in going into such an Alliance, was the Destruction both of himself and his Kingdoms; and the Mischiefs which ensued, how grievous soever, are rather to be deemed the Effects of *Resentment*, than *Principle*.

The Restauration set the *Crown* and *Church* once again upon their *common* Foundation, and the Byass ran as strong upon the other Extream. *Puritanism* gave way to open Debauchery; and Ranting and Profanity took Place of *Phanaticism*, till at last, in meer Wantonness, and for Sport sake, rather than out of any Principle, or good Policy, were the *Dissenters* harressed, dragooned, and plundered, in such manner, that they were debarred from Worship; their Goods were seized; and their Persons thrown into the common Prisons. And how remarkable must it have been to your Lordships? to see how those Cruelties united all the disagreeing Sectaries into one common Interest, and made them, by Oppression, more stanch in their Principles, and confirmed their Dissention into an insuperable Obstinacy, and Hatred against that *Church*, for whose Safety this was pretended to have been done.

The succeeding Reign was, in a very uncommon manner, remarkable for the *Crown's* coaxing them again with their Liberties, in hopes of making their Resentments against the Established *Church*, for past Injuries, Instruments of ruining It, to let in That of *Rome*; but yet so firm were they to the true Interest of their Country, as generously to fall in with all proper Measures for Preserving the *Church*, because they were sensible, the Protestant Religion, and their Civil Liberties, would sink in Its Ruin; which, as it must
needs

needs be a Proof with your Lordships, of the *Dissenters* sincere Regard to the *Church*, as part of the Constitution, so it is hoped, it will be to all others a Conviction of their Readiness to unite in her Defence against any common Danger; and the happy Consequences of such a Concurrence, will always be remember'd with the utmost Gratitude to the Instruments of it, by all who have any Sense of, and Value for, their Religion, and Civil Privileges; because it brought the Nation under a new Head, who not only took care to have those invaluable Blessings secured to it, during that Reign, but, from his wise Foresight, also transmitted them to Posterity.

Then was it that the *Church* reaped the happy and pleasing Fruits of *Moderation*, and *Christian Charity*; the Example of a Prince, full of natural Goodness and Humanity, soon influenced those in a subordinate Power to draw into Practice so heavenly a Pattern. The narrow Distinctions, between those of the Establishment, and the *Dissenters* therefrom, were almost forgot; Men were acted by more generous Motives; and to serve God and their Country, as far as their Capacities enabled them, almost grew the common Religion of the Nation. Then it was the *Dissenter* was easy, and then it was that the *Church* flourished; because Brotherly Love, and the Exercise of Charity, made the *Dissenter* begin to respect the *Church*, as Fellow Christians, and not as Persecutors and Oppressors,

pressors; and, to many Persons Knowledge now living, the *Meetings* grew thin, and the *Parish Churches* were crowded.

And your Lordships must have taken Notice of the happy Influence of such generous Principles upon the succeeding Reign; because They trained up such a Nursery of Heroes and Patriots, as made the World fear and admire them. The *Queen* and the *Protestant Religion*, then were equally the Wonder of the Earth; and there was no Distinction, or Contention, between the Subjects of *Great Britain*, but who loved their Country and their Sovereign best. But — God, at length, for our Sins, took away this lovely Prospect. A Minister of Darkness, alarms the Nation with a horrible Phantome, under the Disguise, and Appellation, of a *Church*; the whole Constitution shook at the Appearance, and, without a singular Interposition of Providence, must have fallen into utter Ruin. Upon that fatal Turn, a *Name* only, triumphed again over Religion; and all the Ties, and Obligations of publick Society, were most wickedly violated, as well as the Duties of private Life, which brings us to the last *Reason*, to which, with the utmost Submission, is begged your Lordships Attention, upon this important Affair.

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REASON IV. *All those Laws for Civil Disqualifications, have not been the Produce of mature Deliberation, so much as of Party Heat.*

This cannot be taken Notice of, but with the utmost concern, especially to your Lordship's, who must have too true a Regard to the Honour of things Sacred, and of a Religious Import, to see them Prostituted to Secular purposes, without a due Abhorrence of such Practices. When such a Party, or Faction, get the Ascendant, that lifts under the Name of *Cchurch*; and Strips it from Religion to make it a Tool of State; then all these, indeed, as are not of their Completion, and cannot go their Lengths, shall be Branded for *Hereticks*, *Schismaticks*, or any Name of Reproach, sufficient to render them obnoxious to the Legislative Power, and procure such Acts as may disqualify them from a Membership in the Community; that is, of serving their Country in any employ, the Government may have Occasion for them in. And never have things run high in this Channel, but when under the Influence, of narrow and selfish, or very wicked and traiterous Designs.

In that thoughtless, wanton, Reign, when the Wealth and Strength of the Nation, was draining off as fast as possible to support the Extravagancies of a Debauch'd Court at
Home,

Home, and Favour the destructive Greatness of a Neighbouring Monarch ; then was almost half the Nation *Bound* under a Pretence of the Church, but with a real Intention to make the Constitution fall the easier Sacrifice. When Debauches, and Profligates, were the Patriots of their Country, and all was giving up the cheapest way to a Foreign Tyrant, then was Religion banished for an empty Name, and the Nation was to have the Sanction of the Churches Seal to its Ruin : Under Pretences of Serving and Securing that, the best Subjects are laid in Chains, and the *Saving the Church*, is impiously made a Handle, for *destroying the People*.

And how much better Times, and better Prospects were hastening upon us, when lately the same Engine was played against the Nation. *The Church*, broke our most Solemn Engagements and Alliances ; *The Church* betrayed our Confederates, and made a Sacrifice of the distressed in our Protection ; *The Church* divided a Victorious Army ; *The Church* hudled up an Ignominious Peace ; and *The Church* for our lasting Security after all those glorious Exploits, binds in Fetters, half the Subjects in the Kingdom.

When these things, my Lords, come before your Serious Review ; and you consider how *near*, how *very near*, the Nation has been brought to Destruction, by these holy Artifices, it is not at all doubted, but
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your Lordship's will concur in all Measures proper, to retrieve the Honour and Glory of the British Constitution, and bring Affairs back to that happy Posture, when we loved one another as Brethren, and Fellow Christians, and heartily united for the Publick Good; by the Stricking off these Shakles, which are not only the continual Promoters and Incentives of ill Blood and Hatred, but also the great weakners of that Power, which is our common Protection.

Thus, my Lords, with the utmost Humility and Submission, are laid before you these few *Reasons*, out of a great many, which might be Suggested, to shew the Advantages that would accrue to the Publick, by placing all his Majesty's Subjects upon an equal Foot, with Relation to their *Civil Capacities*. And this has been done with the utmost Brevity in Regard to the great Value of every Moment of your Lordship's Time. But if Leisure will admit of any further Review, of what may be Suggested from so mean an Instrument, as this comes from, your Lordship's attention is humbly prayed to these *After Considerations*.

That we desire with Earnestness not to be understood, concerning, *adding to the Power of the Crown*: For it must be owned that a *Power* therein, may be so great, as justly to create Jealousies, and Uneasinesses, in the People. For tho' a good Prince can-

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not be too absolute, in his Authority, because he will always consult, and act, for the good of his Subjects; yet if such a one be complimented into a Power, over which the People have no Check, and that be transmitted to Posterity; humane Frailties may, in some, prevail so, as to employ such a Power to Mischievous Purposes, and to the great Detriment of the Community.

Of any approaches towards such a *Power*, the People of the British Nation, are most Apprehensive of a *Standing Army*; that is of such a *Military Power*, at the Command of a Prince, as exceeds what is necessary for Guards and Garrisons, in time of Peace. But your Lordship's will readily discern that, any Addition to such a *Power*, is so far from being Suggested, or deducible, from any of the foregoing *Reasons*, that it is quite the contrary; for they plead only for Strengthening the *Civil Authority* of the Crown. And my Lords, in Proportion to the increase of That, with the other be always less wanted. How much the more all Civil Employments are discharged by Persons of Ability and Fidelity, by so much the less is the Nation liable to Disturbances, and consequently will there be less Occasion for a Soldiery; for that *Power* in time of Peace, is no other but an Auxilliary to the *Civil*, and to be called in only when Disorders run too high for the Magistrates to Correct. To lessen therefore any Occasions, for such Help,

Help, which is not only disagreeable to the People, but also expensive to them, the most ready and sure way is to Strengthen the *Civil Power*; which is Strengthening the Crown in such a manner, as from the very Nature of things, adds uppon all Accounts to the Security of the People; because such a *Strength* arises from the chearfull and Faithful discharge of Duty in the Subject, to the Community; so that instead of making any part of the State dangerous, to any other part of the State, it is the most naturall Bond and Cement of a mutual Interest, and makes the Welfare of the Crown and the Subject inseperable.

By how much the more Faithfully the King is served in *Civil Employs*, so much the less Occasion will there be for the ungrateful and Expensive aid of a *Military Power*. And the late *Rebelliou*, supplies us with too convincing Arguments of this truth. The *Legal Incapacities*, under which the best Friends to their Country lay bound, in the close of the late Reign, made it necessary to supply many *Civil Posts* of great Consequence, and Trust, with Persons, much more inclined to an Interest that was contriving our Destruction, than that of preserving the Honour of their Country, their Religion and Liberties. This made easy way for a Rebellion, when Persons dared openly avow their Prejudices to the *Protestant Succession*, and their Affections to a *Ruler*, who

could never be had without a Subversion of the Constitution both in *Church* and *State*; and all without Impunity, or Discouragement from the Magistrate. And this being the unhappy Posture of Affairs in which his present Majesty found this Nation; and a Rebellion, hatched up under the Influence of those fatal Measures, breaking out soon after his Majesty's Accession to the Crown, a great charge was necessarily put upon the Nation, to raise a *Military Force*, to resettle those Disturbances, which grew out of an ill Distribution and use of the *Civil Power*. For had all Commissions of the Peace, Leiutenancy, Militia, and such like Posts, been filled with Persons of Zeal and Fidelity to the *Protestant Succession*, your Lordship's, and all the considerate part of Mankind, will believe, that those Traiterous Intentions might have been crushed in Embryo, and the Rebellion stifled in its Birth; whereby a vast Expence would have been saved to the Nation; and many Lives have been saved, that were lost in the Field, or Forfeited by the Laws. His Majesty indeed, as soon as could be, turned out many Disaffected Persons and filled their Places with the best that could be found within the *Legal Qualifications*; but those *Fatal Bonds* tyed the Hands of so many, that, as it has been already observed to your Lordship's, many Places were forced to remain in the Execution of such who espoused and assisted

assisted the Cause of the Enemy, rather than that of their King and Country.

We cannot therefore but with the utmost Earnestness, that is consistent with the Deference, due to your Lordships great Characters and Stations, *intreat*, that an Affair of such great Importance to the common Good, may have its due Weight in your Lordships Determinations; and that no partial Regards may come into Competition with the Interest of our Sovereign, and the Prosperity of his Kingdoms. Tho' the Salaries and Profits of many Civil Employes, have too much their Influence, upon some selfish little Minds, who are therefore for Engrossing them within the *Church's* Pale, not for any Security to That, but for their private Advantage; yet we are certain, that much more extensive Views, and much more generous Motives, will weigh with your Lordships in this momentous Debate; while such consider the Posts for their Profits only, your Lordships will regard them as they are in themselves, *Fortresses* and *Securities* to the Government; and therefore pursue such laudable and generous Measures, as best provide for their Supply, with Persons, who will best answer the important Ends of Government, and the true Purposes for which they are constituted.

How mean and unjust, as well as invidious, do some Persons, who would put themselves

themselves off for great Friends to the Church, argue? When they say, *How can those who are not of the CHURCH, put in any Pretensions to its Profits?* For such hereby not only confound the Church of England with the Church of Christ, but also erect it into the Seat of the Sovereign. For, as it has before been just suggested to your Lordships, *The Church of England as by Law Established*, is not any more a Church of Christ, than the Church of Scotland, or any other National Church, of Protestant Christians, who all agree in the same Essential Articles; because it only makes a Part of *That Church*, and therefore, upon that Foot, has nothing to claim of superiour Merit before the *Dissenters*, who are equally Members with themselves. Besides, in this respect, the Employes here contended about, have no Relation to it. If then the proper and true Sense be affixed to it, and by it is meant, that Part of the Kingdom which are in Communion, upon such Terms and Observances, which the *Civil Legislative Power* has thought meet to order, for Decency, in the Externals of Worship, and Discipline; then such Reasoners usurp a Power not their Due, and the *Creature* lifts it self above the *Creator*, by assuming a *Right* which is only in the Nation's common Head upon the Throne, and arrogating That to a Part of the Constitution, which is lodged

ed in the Sovereign for the good of the whole.

The Enquiry therefore in this Case, we humbly presume to your Lordships, is, not whether such a one is a *Church-man*, or not; but whether such a one be a *good Subject*, and is ready to give any Civil Pledge of his Affection and Fidelity to the Government. There is none indeed can dispute it, but that an *honest Churchman* must be a *good Subject*: But, my Lords, once again we beg Leave to remind you, that this Title has been so shamefully, and mischievously abused of late, that the Enemies, both of our Religion and Government, have most arrogated it to themselves; insomuch, that lately the most enormous Crimes have been perpetrated under its Sanction; and the Term now is oftner assumed, and more noised about, by Rebels, than by Persons of any Regard to Religion, or the Good of their Country. When therefore those Intruders and Impostors are disown'd, and the *Church* comes to be resettled upon its proper and legal Foundation, it cannot be doubted, but that your Lordships will find so much Affinity between all under that Comprehension, and their Protestant Brethren, who are out of, as to assist in giving the Crown, that is, in other Words, the publick Community, an equal Privilege of their Services.

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There are other pretended Advocates for the Church too, who cannot think of a *Dissenter*, but they presently talk of *Undermining*, and *Sapping Foundations*. But your Lordships, and all under your Influence and Directions, cannot be at all affected by such *Delusory Sounds*. The *Dissenters* are strictly and absolutely of the same Religion, as those within the National Communion, how much soever Incendiaries, and the Enemies, of the Nation's Peace and Happiness, endeavour to widen and aggravate the Difference. And while the Church arrogates no Power that belongs not to her, nor draws down any Aids from the Crown, by groundless Insinuations against her Protestant Brethren, as some Hot-Heads have heretofore done in the Reigns of weak Princes, the *Dissenters* envy them not, and have nothing to dispute with them for; nor is it any thing, the Laws of the Kingdom give the Church, but what the wisest amongst them know it in their Interest to wish well to, and use their utmost Endeavours in its Support; so far are they from *Sapping* any of its *Foundations*. And the worst of their Enemies cannot produce any one Charge against them, of attempting any thing to the Prejudice or Disquiet of the Church, when the Church has not first provok'd them, by Exercising some Power to their Prejudice, not within their Jurisdiction, either from a

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Divine, or humane Origen. So far therefore will your Lordship's be from finding any danger to the Church from the Dissenters, that when they equally enjoy the Priviledges of the Community, and the Publick Exigencies have equally their Services, they will be mutually a support to each other, and jointly add a much greater Strength to the Government.

It is with the utmost concern and even Horrour, that it is almost impossible to close this Subject, without reminding your Lordship's, what must administer a great deal of Grief and Resentment; as it will do to all, who have any due Regard to the Honour of the Christian Name in general, and particularly to the reformed Protestant Religion, and that main support of it, the *Church of England*. And that is the Conduct of many of the Inferiour Clergy.

The late violent Proceedings, in which, amongst the Discouragements loaded upon all who were Friends to the Protestant Succession, the Dissenters had their share; seemed to let loose such a Spirit of Bitterness and Envy, that when the Civil Power had laid in Chains almost half the Nation, under a Notion of securing the *Church*, and disabled them from serving their Country, the Pulpits were Rung against the Dissenters, and they were Pronounced upon by some, of more Zeal than Knowledge or Charity, as Persons not only consignable to eter-

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nal Damnation hereafter, but as not fit to enjoy the common Priviledge of Society here, or permitted to breath in a Country amongst Church-Men. These Narrownesses, my Lords, and unchristian Treatments, from no other Motive than Pride and Ignorance; have almost debased the Name of *Church* into Contempt and Reproach; and not only our Religion, but even the common Ties of Society, and Neighbourhood, have almost been Preached away for an empty Name. So that to all those who have at Heart the general good of Mankind, and the Honour of Religion, but more particularly the Interest of Great-Britain, and the Credit of the *National Establish'd Church*, such Measures must be very desirable, which are likely to contribute, in blotting out such Distinctions, and taking it out of the Occasion and Opportunity of a vain wicked Mind, to treat with so much Inhumanity, a Fellow Protestant, and a Fellow Subject. And as those valuable Regards are more eminently under your Lordship's Review, and Concerns, so it is not questioned, but your great Authority, will be employed to give all such Measures there wished for Success; that we may not only live hereafter more becoming Christians, and more like Men, but fall into such a mutual Confidence, and good will towards each other, as may both retrieve the lost Honour of our Religion, and our Country, and contribute

tribute to the Strength and Authority of the Government.

We cannot be in Pain about, what Side your Lordships will determine on, in this Affair, when your Lordships come to consider likewise, that this mischievous Division of the Nation, has not only destroyed all mutual Charity, and, under the Name of a *Church*, brought a Reproach upon Religion, but also even broke those *within the Pale*, into the most unchristian Treatment of one another. The Preachers of Peace, Charity, and good Works, are stigmatized with Names of Reproach, as *False Brethren*, and *Betrayers of their Order*; and what is the more surprisngly remarkable, is, that One who now does Honour to the Bench your Lordships sit on, as well as to the Protestant Name in general, notwithstanding he is owned by all the World, to have best vindicated your Order, and the *Church of England*, as by Law Established, of any yet, against all its Enemies, and particularly *Presbytery*; yet, even this Person is reviled by some of the same *Church*, and suggested by them to their Hearers, to be any thing that may excite their Passions and Indignation; and, tho' with the utmost Inconsistency and Contradiction, will sometimes have him to be a *Presbyterian*, and at others a *Quaker*, or whatsoever best gives

Vent to their present Disposition of Wrath towards him. Little better has it likewise fared with another of your Lordships Station, whose Ministry and Example, for many Years, in the City of *London*, supported, amongst those under his Care, a lively Sense of Piety, and brotherly Love; and warmed every attentive Hearer with the Charms of Religion and Vertue; yet since this worthy Person, and exemplary Christian, has, by the Favour of his Sovereign, been raised to a Station, wherein he has judged it his Duty to cultivate such Principles, with Relation to Government, that do no quadrate with the Apprehensions of some of the inferiour Clergy, who are vehement for somewhat *they call a Church*; he is treated by them in a manner, that puts not only Christianity, but even Humanity, to the Blush.

Since therefore the source of these Mischiefs, and Stains to the Christian Name, must be too notoriously manifest, to your Lordship's to have had their Rise, from the Distinctions which a false Policy, and not the Differences of Truth and Error, have made in the Kingdom; it is, even with Assurance, that we promise our selves your Lordship's Application to, and Concurrence with proper Measures to, heal such unhappy Breaches. And more especially too when it is considered, how much these Divisions weaken that Power, which is the main support

port of the whole Constitution; and that, because not only the Security of the Nation, but particularly that of the Church of England, are only to be restored and encreased, by placing again all his Majesty's Protestant Subjects, upon an equal Foot of Capacity for Civil Employ, your Lordship's will encourage and expedite the Removal of those Incapacities which in a few Years have done so much Mischief.

A little more of your Lordships Patience, we must yet crave, not so much to remind your Lordships of the reasonable Explanations, lately given, by One upon your own Bench, concerning the Nature and Obligations of Civil and Religious *Tests*, as to take this Opportunity of recommending them to the Acquaintance, and serious Attention of all Persons whatsoever; and this, with the most humble Submission, we beg Leave to do; because it is of no small Moment in this Debate, to determine nicely what *Tests* a Civil Community *can demand* for Pledges of Fidelity from her Members, and what is *not in her Power* to convert to such Purposes.

That *Great Prelate* tells us, that an *Oath* supposes the Existence of a Being, or many Beings, who will avenge and punish *Perjury*; and therefore that it is the best Instrument which Men could contrive for the Service of humane Society, in Cases of
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Property, Life, and Death. That it is contrived for the Service of humane Life, in this World, as the best Methods of finding out Truth, and securing Justice, in Cases relating to *Subjects*; and of carrying forward the Ends of *Government*, when it is required as a Security for Men who are entering into subordinate Offices; without whose Help, the supreme Magistrate can neither support himself, nor protect the Rights of private Men. That the End of it is wholly secular and worldly: And that in Cases of Judicature, it is not a Political Tool, and an Engine of State; but an Instrument of Justice, Right, and Truth; as the Means of Impartiality, and of Procuring to every one, what is their Due, and what they have a Right to. But, the *Holy Sacrament* is entirely religious, and is a Part of Worship in the *Congregations* of Christians. It is a *positive Institution* of our Lord himself; and the Celebration of it, is his Command to his Disciples. It was instituted and ordained for the more effectual Memory of *Him*, who brought *Life and Immortality to Light*; and who by his *Death overcame Death*. And, consequently, to take This, and to turn it to any other Purposes of this Life, is to turn it from its *Original and Natural Purpose*, to, or against, its own Nature, and contrary to the End proposed by the *Ordainer* himself; and to make a solemn Institution of Religion, and a

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Part of Religious Worship, the Means of Partiality, and of Excluding Men from Civil Employ, to which their Institution has no more Relation, than the Complexion of a Face, or the Colour of Hair; is what can never be justified by any Arguments or Considerations whatsoever. And in his Lordship's own Words; ' To make the Celebration of this Institution, which was ordained and confined by our Lord himself to the serious Remembrance of his Death in the Assemblies or Churches of Christians, to be the Instrument of some particular Sort of Christians (as well as of *Atheists*, *Deists*, and *Infidels*) getting into *Civil Offices*; and to be the *Bar* against other sorts of Christians; *is debasing the most sacred Thing in the World into a Political Tool, and an Engine of State.*

Thus much, my Lords, we could not forbear offering, with all Humility, to your wise Consideration particularly, because some Persons, who, by the Tenour of their Writings and Conversation, shew an Opposition to those Principles which are the Support of his Majesty's Government, and consequently the publick Good, have, in a very presumptuous manner, promised the World your Lordship's Authority against taking off those Bonds, which weaken the common Interest of the Nation; endanger the Church, by Divisions and Animosities;
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and threaten Desolation to the whole Protestant Cause; but with a much better grounded Confidence, dare we assure ourselves of your Lordships entire Concurrence, with the Measures for a Publick Good; and more especially when we just now have from the Throne: That, *As none can recommend themselves more effectually to his Majesty's Favour and Countenance than by a sincere Zeal for the Just Rights of the Crown, and the Liberties of the People; so his Majesty determined to encourage All those who act agreeably to the Constitution of these Kingdoms, and consequently to the Principles on which his Majesty's Government is founded.*

F I N I S.





